

**SET
FEAR
ON FIRE**

**THE
FEMINIST CALL
THAT SET
THE AMERICAS
ABLAZE**

LASTESIS



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ADLAGE

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Translated by Camila Valle



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Preface to the English-Language Edition

Set Fear on Fire! was a whirlwind that we wrote very quickly, what seems like long ago. On a calendar, a little over a year may not seem like much, but the path we have traveled as a collective has felt like a lifetime. Plebiscites, municipal elections, parliamentary elections, presidential elections, and the current rewriting of the Chilean Constitution via a constitutional convention assembly have all marked a profound period of social, political, and cultural changes. Today we begin to bid farewell to a murderous, rapist, fascist government and to enter a self-proclaimed feminist era. Using every platform we have, including the new edition of this book, we repeat: *The revolution and the future are, and will be, feminist.*

We fervently believe that this applies everywhere. This is the beauty of being able to translate our ideas and struggles into another region, another language, another culture. In this English-language edition, our bodies remain in the South, but our convictions and many of our uncertainties migrate to the North, that extractivist Global North. Our words migrate together with all our *compañeras* and *compañeres* who must move North to survive, to that Global North that rejects, excludes, persecutes, tortures, deports, kills. We migrate with this book to nourish bridges and create dialogues with those who do not share our tongue but who nevertheless share our struggle—and if they don't, who must learn about and ally themselves with our struggle. With this edition, we demand freedom of movement, the abolition of borders, the right to a life free from violence, and the disarmament of all the world's gatekeepers.

— LASTESIS collective

Us

The experience of one is the experience of all.

The isolation of our feelings and experiences has allowed the patriarchy to take us by surprise, alone and anguished. We can defend ourselves from patriarchal cages by genuinely internalizing empathy and sisterhood, inextricably tied to the collective.

“It’s not me.” “It’s not my fault.” “I’m not the only one.”

It’s not depression, it’s capitalism and the patriarchy.

We are four, but we are certain that through us move the same historical violences that compel us to tell stories like those of so many others.

Thus, we have decided to write this book as an *us*. Every time we share a personal story, we see in the *us* a feminist political stance—that is, a necessary exercise of putting ourselves in the place of another, understanding personal experiences as collective life.

We have been abandoned by our father.

We have been abandoned by our mother, even when living with her.

We have grown up alone because our mom had to take on more than one role.

We are the daughters of a father who committed violence against our mother.

We have been abused.

We have been followed by cars on the street.

We have been afraid to walk down the street during the day.

We have been afraid to walk down the street at night.

We have been confronted by a man masturbating next to us on the bus. Whether we were nine or we were twenty.

We have been raped.

We have been made invisible.

We have earned less than a man for the same work.

We have had to listen to a man explain, condescendingly, something we already know.

We have seen how our ideas are only heard through the voice of a man.

We have been attacked for not being heterosexual.

We have been left without family for defending who we are.

We have given birth.

We have raised children alone. Studied and raised children alone. Studied, worked, and raised children alone.

We have had abortions illegally and without dignity.

We have accompanied our friends through their abortions.

We have been rejected by our partners for having abortions.

We have been hit by an ex on the street.

We have suffered economic violence.

We have suffered obstetric violence.

We have suffered sexual-affective violence.

We have worked three full days in the space of one.

We have been undocumented immigrants.

We are daughters of political refugees.

We have been born in exile and we have grown up in exile.

We choose art as resistance.

We have been persecuted and subjected to violence for speaking our minds.

We keep each other safe.

We know that we have been lucky and privileged in ways that others have not, because we are alive.

We refuse to be complicit in all types of patriarchal violence, oppression, and injustice, the same kind we will expose in this book. You will also read

the vulnerability in these stories—stories of the fires that make up our lives. Life is unfair from this side of the street, but to learn to show and denounce through art is to connect profoundly with emotions, both positive and negative, bound up with ideas. To work with emotions is a subversive gift to the world.

Subversion dipped in beauty is revolution.

Brief Conceptual Notes before We Proceed

Woman

When we use *woman*, we are referring to all subjectivities who understand themselves as such, independent of anatomy.

Sexual Dissident

When we use *dissident*, we are referring to all subjectivities who identify as part of the LGBTQIA+ community.

Man

When we use *man*, in general, we are referring to the patriarchal man—that is, those who reproduce sexist violence at all levels.

Subjectivity

When we use *subjectivity*, we are referring to a person's construction and understanding of themselves, taking into account historical and social contexts.

Hegemony

When we use *hegemony*, we are referring to the absolute domination of something over something else.

Patriarchy

When we use *patriarchy*, we are referring to the social system that privileges men over women and other subjectivities.

Performance

When we use *performance*, we are referring to an act realized both by those who watch it and by those who participate in it. It takes place in a

determinate space and time and, in our case, makes use of language and artistic tools.

Cisgender

This refers to those who identify with the gender they were assigned at birth.

Heteronormativity

The social imposition of heterosexual sexual-affective relationships over other types of relationships.

1 They Take Everything from Us except Our Rage

They take everything from us, except our rage.

[confined]

To the tedium of the domestic and the circuits of the home,
this is the most
dangerous place I could be.

Today the cloak of violence burns.
The wounds inscribed
in our bodies are cooking.

Suddenly, we find ourselves braving the elements
in our own home.

Trapped with no way out,
with homicidal weapons
in sight and the resignation
of the whole family.

They take everything from us, except our rage.

*Song from a collaborative video-performance on
domestic violence, June 2020, LASTESIS collective*

In the animal kingdom, rabies can be transmitted if an animal sinks its teeth into the flesh of another. The virus makes its way from the wound to the brain. First it provokes inflammation, then, death. But to this lethal capacity to spread incurable disease, we could add another type of madness. One that has persisted over centuries without a cure. An atavistic and rancid system that also assails the body. Our bodies. It wounds us, it paralyzes us, and it kills us.

We are mad. Mad against age-old oppression. Mad against historical impunity. Mad and fearful of being assaulted, murdered, forgotten.

The patriarchy courses through the veins of governments and the powerful, the media, the police. It traverses different socioeconomic sectors. It infiltrates tribunals of justice. It travels underground—sometimes, so clearly—and makes its way to the state. It becomes the expression of fury of the narcos and the Central American gangs that use women as shields and spoils of revenge, a disastrous tradition that persists today. Everything the patriarchy touches goes mad.

We are mad. Mad in the face of the constant invisibility of our abuses. Why is it that all the women you know have been abused, but men don't know a single abuser? Because they don't see it. Because, in their privilege, our blood is invisible.

When we were little, they often touched us on the street. We experienced assault with impunity in flesh and blood. They have grabbed our asses, they have stroked their penises on the bus. They have kissed us by force. They have humiliated us. They abused us as kids, young adults, and grown-ups—drunk and sober. Once, one of us was walking around Valparaíso and a guy came out from behind some bushes and yelled: “You like it when they put it in your hole! Run bitch!” And there was no choice but to run. Assault like that, invisible to many, is what we live with every day.

Our testimony is always in question, always doubted, never enough. Presumption of innocence wipes out our truth. The impunity of abuse and rape is normalized and the constant revictimization is unbearable. Even so, they hate when we go out, en masse, to tell them that we will no longer tolerate their mistreatment, violence, and torture.

When we created “A Rapist in Your Path,” we received countless threats on social media. It makes people uncomfortable. The first reaction of many is to defend themselves with “We’re not all like that.” Some even ask: “Why do you call us all rapists if I’m not one?” But our performance clearly points to the life sentences we serve in fear. It is an artistic way of saying that we are not safe. It is hard for them to see it, to see themselves, to unpack it all. They know no one is exempt, or almost no one. Not your father or your grandfather or your brother. Not the boyfriend who claims to be “in solidarity” and promises eternal love. Not even the protest buddy who, if he rummaged through his own past, would find more than one story of mistreatment of which he is author or accomplice. Because many have abused a woman or sexual dissident, in one way or another.

They have hurt us, they have punished us emotionally, they have minimized us, they have tried to explain labor and academic issues to us as if we were inferior. They have perpetuated the wage gap. They have mocked and denied the subjectivities and identities that do not correspond to patriarchal binaries; as if gender were only limited to men and women. They have abused their privileges. They have raped us.

The patriarchy is a judge who judges us for being born. With or without a vulva, to be born a dissident fatally links us to brutality. Everything the patriarchy touches turns into brutality. And we know it will continue inventing even crueller ways to kill us.

Lucía Pérez, a sixteen-year-old Argentinian girl who was raped, impaled, drugged, and tortured to death, knew it. Authorities found those accused of her murder guilty only of the sale of drugs and dismissed all charges of sexual violence.

Jessica Tejada knew it when she was thirty-four. Her partner, Juan César Augusto Huaripata Rosales, stabbed her thirty times in El Agustino, Peru. But Jessica was not the only one who knew; her whole neighborhood knew too, because when they called the precinct, only 200 yards away, for help, the police took an hour to arrive. Jessica was murdered alongside her fifteen-year-old son. The femicider burned down the house in an attempt to

get rid of the evidence, killing their two-year-old daughter and newborn baby.

Brenda Micaela Gordillo, twenty-four, knew it. She was murdered by her partner, Naim Vera, in Catamarca, Argentina, because she was pregnant. So no one would discover the crime, he barbecued Brenda's remains on the grill.

Nicole Saavedra Bahamondes, an out lesbian, knew it in Limache, Chile. She was twenty-three years old when Víctor Pulgar kidnapped, raped, tortured, and murdered her, then went on to live with impunity for more than three years thanks to judicial apathy and negligence.

Ámbar Cornejo knew it in Villa Alemana, Chile. She was sixteen when her mother's partner, Hugo Bustamante, raped, killed, dismembered, and buried her under the house. He had already murdered another woman and her son. Nevertheless, he was released seventeen years before completing his first sentence.

All the women of the world know it because we don't walk the streets in peace. Because if they rape us, we are told that we are to blame. Because the justice system doesn't work and the precarious protection measures on offer are never enough. Because the candidates who are elected to run our governments fill their mouths with slogans of equality, but don't propose state solutions to stop the femicides.

Because it's a lie that they protect us. Because it's a lie that they want us alive. We see it when they reject comprehensive sexual education. We see it when they reject the sociocultural and political change needed to abolish oppression and gendered violence.

They take everything from us, except our rage. And our rage unsettles them. They want us to stay home as if nothing were happening. It bothers them that we go out blindfolded at night, dressed in light, suggestive clothing, to sing "The Rapist Is You" at them. But we are not tired of screaming. Not until that rage turns into revolution. It infuriates them to see that we are fed up with waiting for change to come from their policies and that we are organizing ourselves independently and autonomously. It infuriates them to see that we put our trust in feminist organizations and collectives instead of their patriarchal and colonial institutions. It infuriates them to see us go to each other when we are victims of violence, or to have abortions together—illegal, clandestine. It infuriates them to see us disdain their state politics, because the cops don't keep us safe, we do.

All the women we mentioned died or had trials in the two years before we wrote this book. They are examples of the barbarism of this system; data that many men refuse to retain in their heads. Let's take, for example, the year 2019. Mexico: 916 women and dissidents killed. Peru: 168 femicides. Brazil: 1,314. And in 2020, in the first six months of the COVID-19 quarantine, 55 women were murdered in Honduras.

They want to talk about a virus that spreads without cure? They are killing us.

Ingrid Escamilla, a twenty-five-year-old Mexican woman murdered and flayed by her partner, Erick Robledo, knew it. Her mutilated body was exposed to the media, and a video featuring a retelling of her femicide helped victimize him. The media has not yet learned to narrate how we are killed. The photographs abused her memory even further, and other men took the time to post under the pictures of her disfigured body: "How beautiful all-consuming hatred can be, how marvelous these pictures, how delicious this homicide."

You still want to know why we're mad?

2 Patriarchy and Capital Form a Criminal Alliance

It cannot be understood.

The class struggle cannot be understood without
knowing that the working class is divided into two
subclasses: men, privileged;
women, dominated.

Hey, you!

Private property.

My body will no longer be a pillar of capitalism.

It cannot be understood.

Capitalism cannot be understood without knowing
that it is based on feminized,
labor, sexual, reproductive slavery.

*Song from Patriarcado y Capital es alianza criminal,
July 2018, LASTESIS collective*

They accuse us of wanting to destroy everything, but our feminism seeks liberation from all forms of patriarchal oppression and therefore seeks the common good. We firmly believe that if the world were feminist, we could be closer to a state of well-being, of love, of protection and solidarity.

We are not against all men, we are against people who support and even foment patriarchal, oppressive, violent practices—from murderers to rapists, abusers, and the deadbeat dads who abandon their children. We are also against the murderous social and political system that has been built by capital and patriarchy. How are we to find a place in a system created exclusively from a cis, straight, white male perspective, made with petty and indolent calculation, competitive and inhumane?

What comes after the fall of the patriarchy? We have no idea. The only thing that is clear now is that it must burn. There is no other way of making it disappear.

The Italian feminist philosopher Silvia Federici argues that capitalism is based on unpaid domestic labor and the social reproduction of work. Creating and sustaining new and old workers, parenting, and domestic labor are at the base of this pyramid that marginalizes us, without any type of social or economic recognition. Care work in the family and the household has always been posited as proper or natural to women. The Uruguayan sociologist Karina Batthyány defines *care* as the act of helping a dependent person, whether a child, an elder, or a sick person, in the development and well-being of their daily lives.

How many times have you heard a parent remark, “Good thing I had a daughter,” assuming it is she who will take care of them in their old age, even if she has ten brothers? It is assumed that this care work is the role of women, and that it is always an expression of love. It’s as if it has been established that women do things for others out of love, and therefore shouldn’t require compensation. In the same way that a woman’s life is at

the service of children, it must also be at the service of the elderly. Who came up with that as an intrinsically feminine virtue?

It is important for feminism to understand care as work, because, among other things, it takes away this affective dimension. As if love were a form of payment, obfuscating exploitation. We grew up with this model of the grandmother, and sometimes the mother, who worked in the home all her life, day and night. She cooked for us, educated us, took care of us when we were sick, washed our school clothes. She had food on the table when everyone got home. She kept the home clean and the family taken care of. For the family, this was understood as simply motherly or grandmotherly love, her duty—but in reality, she was a worker in the home who did not receive a salary. It is impossible today to not see the exploitation of a worker who labors for life without rest or payment.

The sexual division of labor persists even when women can access salaried jobs outside the home, as women still perform most of the paid care work (nurses, teachers, early childhood educators, care-givers for the elderly). It is clear how these occupations continue to be “women’s work.” Providing this type of care is seen as the “natural impulse” for women in their professional lives. Unfortunately, these jobs are usually poorly paid, unrecognized, and devalued by society.

We believe that care is a collective and social question, not an individual one. We have chosen an anecdote—at the crossroads of gender and class—to more clearly illustrate the alliances formed by patriarchy and capital.

For years now, it has become necessary to rethink the notion of family. The nuclear family model, with the self-sacrificing grandmother or mother, is disintegrating. We ourselves have decided to generate and inhabit other family formations, in which sexual-affective and blood ties are no longer the only possible bases of kinship. We choose our family, we think about and live it collectively; in this sense, the affective goes far beyond the old paradigms.

Patriarchy and capital form a criminal alliance, without a doubt. And, evidently, when we live in a system that exploits and oppresses us, it permeates all possibilities of freedom and justice. As long as this perverse alliance exists, we know that we will, sadly, never have equal conditions of life. At least not for now.

“Patriarchy and capital form a criminal alliance” is a historic war cry. It is because of this link that we decided to name our first performance in 2018 after it, based on Silvia Federici’s *Caliban and the Witch*. In broad—perhaps giant—strokes, both capitalism and the patriarchy feed off oppression. They share the nefarious characteristic of constituting themselves through violence, many times insidious, and many other times, right across the face. Again and again. And again. They are slaps of historical oppression, felt most deeply by women and those with counter-hegemonic bodies.

The alliance between capitalism and patriarchy is founded on the relation between oppressor and oppressed, in which the oppressor reaps the benefits of the labor of the oppressed—also known as *surplus value*. When a woman is the oppressed subject, she bears the demands of labor both at work and at home.

This alliance has—with great success—placed women in the role of safekeeper of the domestic realm, performing care work for their children, and if they don’t have any, for the maintenance of partner relations in which the man, given his exploitation at work, must be tended to in the home.

In this type of alliance, the working-class woman, the partner or other fitting term, sustains all these macro-and microexploitations on her body. The bodies of women and their reproductive function are the life of capitalism—our bodies are territories of exploitation and, at the same time, also of resistance.

In the same way, major economic groups and politicians continue to exploit land in favor of profits and opportunism. This form of alliance directly confronts women who defend the environment, for example. In other contexts, businessmen and politicians come face to face with feminists who have identified and denounced these repressive regimes.

The parameters of the market have infected all spheres of life—social, cultural, political, and, of course, economic. In Chile, fundamental rights like education are contaminated by wealth and free competition, to say nothing of finding comprehensive education that is not sexist or racist. Even the way in which we relate to one another adopts these models: relationships are based on success, merit, client satisfaction, competition among equals. Precarity is intersectional and ever present.

The feminist struggle, at least as we understand it, seeks the opposite. It seeks to bring down these structures and build new ways of relating to one

another from a feminist perspective. A perspective that seeks the common good and, thus, the end to all forms of oppression. When feminists all over the world reenact “A Rapist in Your Path,” it is because we are living similar experiences. Because we feel threatened for similar reasons. And so we chant similar slogans.

As long as we continue to live at the intersection of neoliberal capitalism and patriarchy, we will only see sporadic “improvements,” quick-fix solutions that, though much needed, are far from enough.

Encountering feminism is not obvious or easy, especially given its exclusion from school curricula. Finding feminism begins with a feeling of disquiet, that what you have known as discomforting is not really okay. That which is uncomfortable, that which perturbs, has to do with the existing system, where everything is turned into consumer goods: bodies, animals, nature, experiences.

On the neoliberal capitalist stage of today, feminism must denounce and posit, must everywhere problematize that which has been normalized for centuries. It is necessary to understand that what we thought we knew is no longer true; from there, feminism can educate and guide people, especially starting in childhood. Feminism must create tension in order to demolish violent practices inherited through institutions, social relations, and patriarchy.

The feminist struggle, in this sense, is the practice of constantly swimming against the current. It is extremely draining work that accompanies us for life. We know that the real changes it produces probably won't be for us, but for those to come.

But the intersectionality of our oppression urges denunciation. On November 20, 2019, we invited women and dissidents to perform “A Rapist in Your Path” with us in the Plaza Aníbal Pinto in Valparaíso, because in Chile, the system treats us like scum and we feel it every day. Many murdered women counted on protective measures, arranged by the justice system, that never materialized. Our retirement pensions are miserly because unpaid labor also strips us of healthcare benefits and social security payments. The system ignores the domestic work that many mothers and grandmothers have performed for years. It ignores the double or even triple workday, which still affects many working women who, after finishing their paid shifts, have to take care of domestic work at home. In addition, there's the wage gap: we are still paid less for the same work our male colleagues

do. Sexism is reflected at work, in the healthcare system, in all spheres of life.

One of the strengths of patriarchal states lies in the invisibility and historical denial of violence against women. For example, in 2001, in a cotton field of Ciudad Juárez, the Mexican state made clear what its institutional practices were. In November of that year, the bodies of eight murdered women were found. Despite pleas for justice from their families and others, the police did nothing. This was later affirmed by the sentence of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, where negligence in the investigation came to light. The Mexican state was condemned not only for its faults, but also for its obvious discrimination due to the social status and gender of the murdered women.

The femicides Edgar Ernesto Álvarez Cruz and José Francisco Granados de la Paz kidnapped, tortured, raped, and murdered at least ten women, but the state looked the other way. And this behavior is replicated in country after country.

We thought that our first performance in Valparaíso would last two and a half minutes and that would be it, but no. It resonated around the world, demonstrating the global scale of oppression. Though we are honored, we are also disappointed and extremely concerned that, in every corner of the planet, what women and dissidents are owed is still the same.

We were moved when activists performed our song and it became an anthem in many, many countries and cultures. It is evidence that the patriarchal system is everywhere, inhabits every country, every town, every city—even in those sold as idylls of gender equality.

We want something fairer for everyone. Now, if, along the way, patriarchal cis men feel oppressed, it's a struggle of which they must take charge. We did not have privileged access to information. We did not read feminist theory in the formal educational institutions we attended; there was an enormous vacuum and invisibility of this type of knowledge. We sought out information, just as we think it is everybody's individual responsibility to do. And after education comes practice, because reading a few PDFs is useless if it doesn't help deconstruct cisgender, patriarchal, heteronormative masculinity, if it doesn't stop them from covering up for their abusive friends, being accomplices through silence, or worse still, continuing to promote and generate patriarchal, abusive, and violent practices. To accept

that they have privileges and dispossess others must be difficult, but it is the only possible path in this struggle for a more just society.

However, it seems that it is easier for them to ask us what they should do. As if we were their eternal mothers and it is our responsibility to tell them what to do to deconstruct themselves, to be part of our fight, because it's not fair for them to be excluded from a space—even though we are the ones who have been historically left out. We cannot lead a battle and, on top of that, worry about what they could do if this very same political, social, and economic system doesn't please them.

We have lived for centuries in an extractivist and brutal system that created relations of power that simply cannot continue to exist. Feminism has come to say that life is much more complex than what they have always believed.

From our end, we want to eradicate everything that hurts us. It is not so hard to understand: the violence of the patriarchy has certain levels and forms that are present in everything we see, smell, feel. One must be a great hypocrite to deny it. We are talking about a paradigm shift from the starting point of feminism. A shift through which the criminal alliance of patriarchy and capital will disappear, along with its oppressive structures.

3 My Body Will No Longer Be a Pillar of Capitalism

Capitalism possesses the brutal capacity to take ownership of everything. Even critiques of capitalism end up processed, reappropriated, defanged as tools of struggle, and turned into consumer goods, commodities of the market. One of capitalism's survival mechanisms to sustain its hegemony, is to absorb strategies of resistance. It absorbs them, wrings them out, and keeps some slogans for itself, offering them up in the form of extractivist products and services, devoid of all context and perpetuating labor exploitation.

It does not surprise us that the same happens with feminism. We've seen it ourselves: capitalism has tried to appropriate feminist slogans to increase sales—though it would be interesting to know if sales do indeed go up when feminism is made into a commodity. Feminism as battle cry, as vociferous demand from a base, from fury, converted into fashion slogan. Everything well lit, colorful, totally predictable, totally ecofriendly— body positive— girl power— the future is female— inclusive— diverse— empowered. Bullshit. Products made from the exploitation of women and children in the Global South. Total fucking bullshit.

But isn't it better that it be fashionable instead of invisible? Could this perhaps be understood as a way for people to draw closer to feminism, at least in form if not in content? Could it be not one more way to fuck us over, but instead, from within neoliberal capitalism, a way to disseminate feminist ideas and build legions of transgenerational and transnational feminists?

We don't know yet. There is no thesis, only hypothesis. The question remains open.

But if capitalists ask us what we prefer, a horde of teenagers singing about girl power or teenagers stuck on ballads that promote toxic ideals of

sexual-affective relationships, well, then, we'll go with the first option.

Now, beyond the feminist agenda, the feminine figure has been historically co-opted by capitalism. For decades, "beauty" products have been made and sold by major transnational brands, defining a particular type of body and personality for women. On top of this, there is also the "pink tax," when products, such as razors, are overpriced when marketed to women compared to men. It is a ripe market, once again, for exploitation.

In its constant battle against our bodies, capitalism seeks to eliminate its own power to generate resistance to its violences and oppressions. Our bodies become commodified territories, where all our intersecting oppressions play a strategic role in our own domination, in a context in which capitalism has hegemony over what is accepted, beautiful, and digestible.

Eurocentric and North American ideals of beauty have historically subjugated South American, Indigenous, Black, enslaved, and mestizx bodies. In recent decades, it is thanks to social media, connectivity, and information speed that many dissident bodies have rejected the humiliations of a rigid canon determined by a mass culture set on locking us up for not fitting in. It really bothers them when we don't fit in, when we don't fit their fantasies, their myths, their desires to see us servile and quiet.

Hypocrisy abounds. Convenient ignorance is quotidian, naturalized, massive. Stereotypes around what it means to be a "woman" are absurd and do not take reality into account. A model of "womanhood" does not exist. There is no given or natural way of being a woman. Biological essentialism does not exist for us.

In this respect, we are in the camp of Judith Butler, US philosopher-feminist and great exponent of queer theory: *Gender is performed*. Gender is made, not born, and in this construction of gender, the ways of inhabiting both the feminine and the masculine are multiple and diverse. We want to break with established oppressive and violent frameworks.

We want to break with the patriarchal structures that regulate our existence from birth to death. Not only in the most obvious and identifiable ways, such as sexual and domestic violence, but also in the most subtle, nearly imperceptible, forms.

The patriarchal structure mutates. In our childhood, it took the form of an old evangelical man who, upon seeing us—seven-year-old girls, dirty

from playing in the mud, dressed in our sporty clothes because they were the most suitable for our fledgling careers as tree climbers—told us that we were not girls because we were wearing pants. That God would not love us because we behaved like boys. We cried. There was nothing left for us to do but cry at this first encounter with injustice and patriarchal spirituality in this form of man-God.

The patriarchal structure takes the form of the school inspector general's inquisitive gaze as, ruler in hand, he measures the length of our skirts. Because too-few inches are of the utmost importance when it comes to determining our behavior and how we receive education.

We were teenagers, we were wrong about many things, but none of that invalidated our legitimate claim to the right to dress comfortably, warmly, and according to our activities.

This structure reappears to tell us that things have always been like this, that we are not going to change anything, that it is important to wear clothes that define us as ladies, and to behave accordingly.

In this system, the state operates like a mafioso, as the main promoter and accomplice of the systematic violence that we experience, without representation or parity in governmental spheres. It prompts us to organize autonomously, to strengthen our networks, to hold meetings that can deepen the demands of the oppressed. Feminism is an act of resistance and courage, a historical heritage born of the fear and terror used to control the dissident masses, with female and feminized bodies experiencing the greatest violations of human and civil rights.

Even still, in the age of instant information, acts of feminist resistance continue to be met with epithets such as: *feminazi*, *sexless lesbian*, *tomboy*. As if this would offend us! They do not see that we already reclaimed their insults long ago.

In any case, such comments only tell us of their inability to reflect and be at the forefront of the social changes that we have experienced throughout the world in recent years.

It is our duty to continue to contribute and work to transform the binary and patriarchal gaze without leaving behind the streets and public spaces, which are always the main stages for our liberatory demands.

Unfortunately, in this fight, feminism has enemies everywhere. The anti-everything, anti-abortion, the right, the left, the church, the

conservative sector, and even the progressive one—in all of these spaces there are people affected by feminism’s historical denunciations. Denunciations that disturb them and question their positions of power.

If we move to the right among the world’s ideologies, we still find the darkest and most obsolete hate speech and discrimination protected by old conservative Christian models. It is the omnipresent cliché of the everything-woman: (re)producer of life, mother of all, silent as the virgin—the self-sacrificing wife who stays at home raising children, takes care of her cheating husband and forgives everything, is a support system for the businessman, is pretty for the president’s first lady.

If we look at the other side, we come face to face with the *machitos* of the left. Those who at the student movement assemblies wouldn’t let you talk, or who would shut you up by talking over you. They are the same men who tell us now that we are barging in with feminist discourse while Chile undergoes a social revolution. As if those two things were unrelated. As if we had to pick between class struggle and feminism.

When we created *Patriarcado y Capital es alianza criminal*, we synthesized the ideas of Silvia Federici through the following verse: “The class struggle cannot be understood without knowing that the working class is divided into two subclasses: men, privileged; women, dominated.”

The working class is divided into two classes—working-class men, and working-class women and other sexual and gender dissidents. The latter is a subclass and, therefore, more oppressed than the former. If we add the dimension of race to the picture, it becomes even more fragmented. Nevertheless, the left, on a theoretical and practical level, often forgets that social struggles are also kept alive thanks to all those women and dissidents.

They (too) easily forget that feminist demands are intersectional. From within feminism we can raise, for example, the right to education. But the *machitos* of the left think that feminism will degenerate the people’s struggle. They have said it to our face, because for them, the “class” struggle comes first, and then come those “secondary,” supposedly irrelevant, demands. They are not yet able to see that we will not be left behind again, that we are part of the discussion, and just as our demands are feminist, the responses to our demands will have to be too.

But people say so much shit. Feminism bothers them, irritates them. They even made up that we, LASTESIS, are financed by the United States, Hillary Clinton, the CIA, even Nicolás Maduro, just to draw attention away

from what's important. That we are being paid as part of a grand scheme to make Chileans forget about relevant issues like the pension system, access to healthcare, even dignity. To forget about the fight for a dignified life, which we still lack in our country.

They do not understand autonomy, or that conviction is a political mobilizing force. They do not understand that money is not the only reason to do mass performance. In fact, there were men who bought URLs of our names and then tried to charge us millions of pesos to buy them back. They had to eventually resign themselves to the fact that we didn't have a single peso to pay their ridiculous ransom and that we couldn't care less about their stupid websites.

Nor are we lacking in "Che Guevaras" ... all those political leaders who showed up at the student movement assemblies and councils raising their fists, even though many of them had been "called out," "canceled," or reported through different channels for assault. They can shove their anti-government, anti-systemic discourse wherever they want, because that incongruence has long been unacceptable. We will no longer tolerate that double standard. They can no longer get away with filling their mouths with revolutionary words while enacting other forms of oppression. Maybe in the 1980s, maybe even up until 2018—but no way in hell can they get away with it now.

Those incapable of seeing a dignified life in that which is different are warped by misogyny, as well as homophobia and transphobia. Two years before we were born, queer Chilean writer, performer, and dissident activist Pedro Lemebel was already confronting these people, speaking for Pedro's own difference and that of all children who were to be born with "broken wings," as he wrote in *Loco afán: crónicas de sidario*. Why deny them/us the right to believe in the revolution? To make the revolution? To live the revolution? To mobilize our bodies as tools of struggle and resistance against neoliberal capitalism and patriarchy?

This is what, unfortunately, with their meager reflective capacity, many can't see. They don't want to see it or it doesn't suit them to see that violence is not only institutional, it's also domestic, constantly present in the day-to-day. It is easy to shout slogans at the government, but it is very different when oppression affects you directly; it gives them hives to be taken to task for their own violence. It is easier to shit on the political class,

which obviously deserves it. But in the private sphere, they act just like them. They are reproducing the very same behavior.

Capitalism is perhaps the most dangerous of patriarchy's allies, but the discrimination against and devaluation of women is not just patriarchal in a neoliberal context. During the brief Popular Unity government in Chile before the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet, in the exaltation of the worker and his partner, there also existed an arbitrary imaginary of the masculine and the feminine. This social and familial configuration was sexist, binary, and heteronormative. If the traditional and heteronormative family in part sustains capitalism, it can also sustain other political and economic systems, including socialism.

In this social structure, there was no room for any other ideal citizen than that of the proletarian man and his female companion who cared for the home and the community. Other subjectivities were (and, in many instances and cultures, still are) simply unimaginable. In fact, the first sexual-dissident protest in Chile was in April 1973, and the headline at the time, during full Popular Unity rule, was "The Rebellion of the Freaks." It was illegal to be homosexual in Chile, a law that changed only relatively recently, at the end of the 1990s.

Our struggle is intersectional and includes all so-called sexual minorities. It includes all women, with or without uteri, and all dissidents: gay, queer, transgender, transsexual, lesbian, homosexual, pan-sexual, bisexual, nonbinary, gender fluid, intersex, asexual, and all the beautiful diversity of the plus sign that accompanies the LGBTQIA acronym.

We understand that those whom we call on to participate in our events do not conform to the official, the accepted, or the hegemonic. The bodies of women and dissidents carry a symbolic load of violence, and as a collective body they stand in defiance of oppressive institutions.

To stand up to normativity, to defy the binary sex-gender system, is to question everything: gender roles, obligatory motherhood, and traditional family. We are not born to be assaulted over and over again. We are not born to be mothers, and if we are, it is only a part of our life, one branch of the larger tree of which it is made.

We are not born to perpetuate the institution of marriage and the nuclear family. It is time to normalize the infinite ways of loving others and to *not* normalize intrafamilial violence. We are not born women according to our

genitals. Not all women have a uterus. As women and dissidents, we erase the borders of the patriarchy with the only territory we have: our bodies.

We are not all born heterosexual. Not all moms are good moms. The maternal instinct does not exist. Not all of us want to be mothers. Not all mothers can give birth.

We are not what the market and the patriarchy want us to be; we will not spend our lives at the service of a system that oppresses us, that only wants us to produce, to extract without conscience, to exploit the earth on which we live, and to bring others into this world to perpetuate the cycle of exploitation and consumption.

We are more than the ones the patriarchy hasn't killed. We are all of us.

Many believe feminism to be only one thing, or don't even consider themselves feminists because they're not academics. But we don't think that matters. For example, many are working with women from their communities, working on communal projects. These people are feminists without knowing it, because they have been kept away from feminist ideas. But we do not think that there is only one valid definition of feminism, nor is there only one way of accessing it. There are many ways of knowing, many ways of learning. We carry the knowing in our bodies—a repertoire, as US-Mexican performance scholar Diana Taylor wrote (2017), that we inherit from generation to generation in colonized territories. We owe a huge debt to theory of and by women and dissidents.

There are multiple feminisms and they are lived in practice. Many feminisms run through us. And in them we have found a place of resistance against the neoliberal and patriarchal system.

Our struggle is clear and we are not afraid.

Feminism is all of us.

4 Together We Abort

I am scared.
I have doubts.
I feel guilty.
I am sad.

Because we grow up in fear of this body
that is not ours.

I am scared.
I am angry.
I am ashamed.
I am unsure.

Because we grow up in fear of this body
that is not ours.

I gather the rebellion to decide for myself.
I gather the courage to recognize myself in you.
I gather the autonomy to decide for myself.
I gather the disobedience to count on myself.
Together, we drive away fear.
Together, we support one another.
Together, clandestine I'll remain.
Together, we will get through.
Together, we listen to one another.

Together, we accompany one another.
Together, we reflect one another.
Together, we abort.

We abort.

We abort the unwanted pregnancy, sexism,
misogyny, strategies of control,
the oppressor, the deadbeat dad, the unjust laws, the
prejudices, and the guilt.
No more fear.

We abort, the child-mothers.

We abort the silence.
We abort forced motherhood.
We abort, because we are not alone.

We abort.

*Song from a collaborative video for the Day for the
Decriminalization and Legalization of Abortion in
Latin America and the Caribbean, September 2020,
LASTESIS collective*

When we were kids, the idea of a mother was like a sugar cube in a hot drink: self-sacrificing, ever present, and possessing a particular natural instinct. The idea of a mother supposed that someone, from the root of their uterus, would want to give birth and care for their children unconditionally. How many times have we heard that not even dogs abandon their offspring? Mothers have carried this weight for years.

In our case, we carry the weight of forced maternity-paternity from the day we are born. In some cases, our fathers left us. To no one's surprise, this is a common cliché, because somehow society tells fathers that the world is theirs, that they should go on adventures and take risks and not let anything get in the way. Unfortunately, sometimes what's in the way is a pregnant woman and the easiest path forward is to abandon her, affectively, economically, or both.

In other cases, our mothers left us. Technically it's the same as with the father, but from the point of view of patriarchal society, it deserves the added charge of "unnatural." As girls, it was impossible to find an explanation for our absent mothers. It was very difficult; Mother's Day was torture. What made this pain even more acute? That everywhere we were told that a woman doesn't abandon her children, but a father does. As if in the second case, abandonment is somehow justified.

It is not a competition of who abandons more: being abandoned fucks your life regardless of who left you. Because the questions abandoned people ask themselves are always the same. Nevertheless, if a father checks out, the culture gives you a simple explanation: "That's just how they are." And there is nothing you can do about it.

Of course, in abandoning their children, a father as much as a mother causes their offspring pain and disappointment. Both submit themselves to the possibility of outstanding and eternal debts. But for some reason, society makes us feel that a mother, unable to be one, is by her very nature incurably evil or sick.

Maternal instinct remains a social and cultural imposition, which is useful for maintaining an obsolete and oppressive family model. The model consists of a man who leaves the house to go work while a woman stays at home to work without any compensation.

Today, certain aspects of this model have been perfected to make mothers believe that they have freedom within the structure of the family and the home. The father leaves, works, provides. The mother leaves, works, and also provides. They are not necessarily married or living together, since capitalism has adapted to allow them a certain degree of independence. Nevertheless, for the most part, the children live with her, while the father is a visitor. The mother comes home from her paid job only to have to do all or most of the domestic and care work, a second work shift. In some cases, this second shift is shared or there is “help,” but the organization of the home and the mental load remains her principal responsibility, and motherly love supposedly unconditional.

This invention of the maternal instinct appeals to love. Men do not live subjugated to paternal instinct. In the end, there are people who are shitty regardless of gender. The point here is how the social construct of motherhood forces a woman to be an object of romantic imaginings, imaginings protected even by the state. A woman can abandon her children, but she is ultimately condemned to a different sentence than a man who abandons his.

We, too, are mothers. We are not against motherhood as long as it is a choice and not an imposition. Of course, there are strategies of resistance in parenting, and today there are feminist mothers raising feminist children, which, though not an easy task, we hope will contribute to a better future.

In our case, motherhood is a constant struggle; it is the experience of being subjected to daily critique. Having been young mothers only increased the social condemnation. It was a mistake and our punishment was to shoulder the responsibility—there was no speaking of abortion. Studying was a privilege because our place was now at home with the baby. If we worked to survive and studied to further our life projects, we were bad mothers because we put our lives before those of our children. The moment we gave birth, we immediately became the property of the father—somehow now he was the one responsible for providing for us, despite the fact that we had always considered ourselves independent people, despite the fact that we had always worked, despite not living with him, despite not

being a couple, despite it being the twenty-first century. Patriarchy always finds a way to intervene in all of our relationships.

With time, our experience of motherhood morphed into the cliché of the single mom. We sprouted eight arms and three heads to try to live up to everyone's expectations. We cook with one hand, do paid work with the other. We are creative and feminist with one of our heads; with another we help with homework. We are child and teen psychologists. With yet another arm, we pay the bills and attend parent-teacher conferences (which are more like mother-teacher conferences). While we finish up our work tasks, we wash the dishes, make grocery lists, take the kids to play outside, fix leaky faucets, study, organize to fight for all the rights they take from us, and on top of everything, with the last remaining hand, we have to remind our children's fathers about child support and that, actually, their payments are late, per usual. Then, at the end of the day, we are called melodramatic, hysterical, crazy.

Patriarchy and capitalism have made motherhood a great burden for many, and they sharply judge those who decide not to be mothers. We have aborted, twice, and we have accompanied many others through their abortions. Every abortion is different, as different as the people who have them. Every abortion experience is unique, but what many abortions have in common, at least on this side of the planet, is secrecy and rebellion.

While we were writing this book, we aborted. We sighed heavily. Worried. Suddenly we had no energy. We kept working. No one could notice. The lawsuits. The suspicious glances. The ballooning tits. Morning sickness as destiny. The guilt. The empowerment and then, again, the guilt. The insistence. Work. Hoping that the patriarchy wouldn't win again. The body. The pills. The accompaniment. The PDF. Friends. The doctor. His look. I don't do abortions. We know. We just want the ultrasound. He called us *mamitas*. Said the kid would be a communist because they came out of the left ovary. The patriarchy winning. Again. He said it stopped growing. In two weeks it would happen naturally. We waited. And waited. Nothing. Another doctor. Everything the same. Bigger. Nausea. The first doctor was a secret conscientious objector. Rage. Desperation. And time. The idea that the patriarchy always robs us of something. The underground market. One hundred thousand Chilean pesos (around \$120). Two sublingual pills every four hours. Blood. Pain. Friends. Chamomile water. The strainer. A small configuration of cells. The bathroom as witness. The blood to the ground or

to the water. The calm. The sensation of recovering sovereignty over one's own body.

In that moment, we had the privilege of having access to information and feminist networks who accompany people through their abortions. But what happens to someone who doesn't have anyone to turn to? What happens when abortion and class intersect? In almost all of Latin America, if you don't have the means to access a clandestine abortion, your destiny is forced motherhood or risk death or prison. In the desperation of people who are poor and don't see any other options, there is the risk of death. It is a tremendous injustice, an injustice that will be reproduced when that person doesn't know what to do with their child.

We have led workshops that have brought us face to face with the patriarchy in its most explicit forms. Wives of narcos who had four or five children, not because they wanted to, but because the men reminded them through shouts: "I am going to fill you with kids so that you can never leave the house again!" These are the mechanisms of control, threats that, coupled with poverty, become obstacles difficult to surmount.

When we seek abortions, we experience the difficulties of any woman in almost all of Latin America, where abortion has happened, happens, and will happen—from autonomous feminist organizations that accompany people through medication abortions to private clinics that accommodate wealthy women who don't have to risk their lives. The problem is the denial of a few who, with the Bible in one hand and the other hand in their pocket, still believe it is their right to moralize on and legislate our bodies.

In 2018, the newspaper *El País* published a survey that found that more than 90 percent of women in Latin America face draconian restrictions on abortion. And of this 90 percent, the punishment remains most severe for the poorest of us.

In Chile, three exceptions to the law forbidding abortion were legalized in 2017: fetal nonviability, rape, and risk to the pregnant person's life. Before then, the richest Chileans still traveled to other countries to terminate pregnancies that endangered their lives or were not viable. What happened to working-class women who couldn't travel out of the country? They had to put up with it, and some put up with it to this day. But this is not only an issue in Chile.

Western societies are not exempt. In France, where abortion is legal up to twelve weeks, what happens if you need a "later-term" abortion? Let's

think, for example, about rural areas where access to healthcare services is more complicated. In 2019, 232,000 people aborted in France, but between 3,000 and 5,000 of those had to travel to Holland, Spain, or England.

In Germany, every three days, a man kills his wife or ex-partner, according to Ulrike Helwerth—communication director of the Deutscher Frauenrat, a coalition of sixty women’s organizations in Germany—in a 2019 interview with Deutsche Welle. Out of every hundred rapes in Germany, only one ends in conviction. Sexist violence goes unpunished, like that New Year’s night in 2016 in Cologne, when hundreds of women were abused and assaulted while celebrating near the cathedral. What did the conservatives do? They used it as pretext to reinforce their xenophobic policies, arguing that migrants were responsible and ignoring the reports made to the authorities.

The right wing venerates the “life” of a morula—an early-stage embryo of sixteen cells—but when the child grows up, their rights are taken away and constantly violated. When the child becomes an adult, they are forced to become a worker, without rights, and let’s hope they don’t complain about wanting a better life! If they do, they can be assaulted or blinded in a single day of protest. When it’s a clump of cells, it is a being sent by God; when they grow up and want to claim what’s theirs, it’s the doing of the devil.

A few years ago, we went over the arguments made during the debate over the abortion law in Chile, and all the pronouncements were the same as those made about the 2004 divorce law: “Now everyone is going to want to break up.” “What is going to happen to those children?” “Without a family, what kind of citizens will they become?” Between 2016 and 2018, legislators gave themselves the luxury of spouting such nonsense as: “It is about the simple willpower of the transitory owner of that [fetal] life, who is not even owner but rather mere administrator or holder.” Or “Those who approve of abortion today are the natural successors of those who justified slavery, Spanish colonization, the prohibition of women’s right to vote, the Nazis, and the communists.”

These arguments are so weak and void of context that they have had to be repeated over and over again to gain traction. Their perspective is based in intolerance and misogyny; they are nothing more than expressions of a fundamentalism so simplistic that it can be reduced to: if abortion is legal, everyone will be aborted.

Before the debate in Chile began over the three exceptions to the criminalization of abortion, horrifying cases came to light. One of them was that of Karen Espíndola, a young woman who was twenty-two when she got pregnant with her first son, whom she would later name Osvaldo.

When Karen was twelve weeks along, she received a diagnosis that terrified her: holoprosencephaly, a malformation basically incompatible with life. Of the twenty-five cases of the condition at the time (2008), only half were born. Karen knew that she wouldn't be the only one to suffer if Osvaldo entered the world; he would suffer too. Karen then went to all the websites and newspapers she could think of to tell her story, and she became a defender of therapeutic abortion, despite, or because of, her love for her son. In Chile, "pro-life" groups started a huge campaign to prevent, without exception, the allowance of abortion in cases of fetal nonviability.

Osvaldo was born on February 13, 2009, and from then on, lived connected to hoses and catheters. His breathing was like that of a flopping fish out of water. Nevertheless, Karen continued her struggle alone: trying to make him happy while begging whoever would listen for the right to abortion, so that other women and babies could be spared such suffering.

Only a few heard her.

Osvaldo died on July 25, 2011. That day, Karen felt that her little one was finally at peace. They were two harrowing years, during which she could do nothing to ease his pain.

The worst part is that the very same people who legislate, who hoist up Chilean flags as if patriotism were the cure to all ills, have a privilege that the rest of us can't count on: they have a platform. And that platform is marked by a discourse of sexism and misogyny. The media has a very important responsibility regarding issues like abortion, yet the platform is always for the same people—the same people who can no longer be allowed to have decision-making power because they are so oblivious to reality. They don't know how most of us have to live; they don't have to shoulder the burden of state violence.

Sexism and misogyny are also constantly reflected in the halls of power. In Chile, those in power celebrate motherhood, regardless of age or material, physical, or emotional conditions. In 2013, then Chilean president Sebastián Piñera prominently appeared in every media outlet praising the decision of Belén, an eleven-year-old girl from Puerto Montt, to not have an abortion. Belén became pregnant after repeated sexual abuse from her

stepfather. Nevertheless, Piñera and his political bloc applauded Belén's "maturity and depth" for deciding to keep the baby, which she spoke of as if it were a doll. For Piñera's bloc, the words of an eleven-year-old girl meant her acceptance of motherhood, the acceptance of a fatal destiny she could not escape, given that, at the time, abortion in cases of rape was still illegal.

The highest authority in the country expressed praise for a girl who was the victim of a crime. It is shameful and absolutely unacceptable that so many politicians, supposed representatives who come to power through "democratic" means, know nothing of the suffering of the people, and even less about what it means to be raped. Looking over their shoulders ostentatiously, they will never see injustice. Their world smells of privilege, not of poverty, pain, or subjugation.

This doesn't just happen in Chile and Latin America. In 2022—not 1800—the constitutional right to abortion was overturned in the United States. In 2020, thousands of Poles took to the streets to protest their government's draconian abortion law, which rolled back decades of struggle and victories. In patriarchal societies, independent of geography or culture, winning a right doesn't mean they can't later take it away.

It will never cease to horrify us that access to such a fundamental right is out of reach for so many. The fight must go on, tirelessly, relentlessly. We have to convince the judges of the world that our bodies belong to us and that abortion is a human right. They are merciless to women, even though we are the victims, and not just by banning abortion. There are many examples: Who can understand why international pressure was needed to hold five men responsible for abusing an eighteen-year-old girl one night in San Fermín, Spain, in what came to be known as the "La Manada" case?

These situations keep exposing a crisis of the institutions in which we are forcibly implicated. The misogyny with which they dictate laws, resolve allegations, and weave our future and our present are all on full display. It is the judges, the politicians, the states that govern us. It is the system that suffocates us.

But none of this is new. It is a history repeated century after century, from the witches burned to those imprisoned for aborting. Resistance, solidarity, and friendship are what keep us alive, keep us in this eternal fight for our existence, that feeling of being accompanied on the path toward liberation, ridding ourselves of those fears and Christian guilt. You know

what we felt after aborting? Great relief. There was no room for sadness or regret.

There has been so much moral manipulation around abortion. The pedophile, rapist church that promotes hateful and intolerant discourse has taken it upon itself to weigh us down with guilt and shame. It has taken it upon itself to idealize and personify the fetus. In the 1990s in Chile, they aired a television campaign featuring a pregnant schoolgirl and a voice-over —“they’re going to kill me, they’re going to kill me”—as the camera zoomed in on the girl’s stomach. Of course, a fetus cannot develop language, but it was much more important to invest in a pro-cellular-life campaign than to invest in a campaign for comprehensive sexual education. Twenty years later, the narratives remain the same. Apparently, not only can fetuses communicate, they also already know what they want to be when they grow up. In Chile, feminists will leave the country without a single engineer, for fetuses have high professional expectations. Haven’t you heard? The fetus is idealized and put before the lives of women and pregnant people. A mother’s love becomes a weapon in their hands, they torment you with divine judgment, they force you to feel guilty.

All of us who rebel against domination over our bodies are punished in one way or another, from constant dismissal to insults, threats, and physical violence. If we don’t respond, they see us as marginal or dissident, continually relegated to a subordinate and second-class position. We do not serve the system. We are wrong and bad.

But, according to this murderous system, there are thousands—millions—of wrong and bad women and dissidents. And it is so liberating to hear these collective voices united by pure conviction. It is clarifying to know that it is not just us, that we weren’t wrong, bad, or alone. Now that we have found each other, we won’t let go. And that feeling that feminism grants us has saved our lives many times over. That feeling that we are in this together. And, together, we abort.

5 Under the Cover of Love

God is without a doubt a man
and we see his misogyny.
Misogyny that destroys our history
with violence, death, and indignity.

Enough already with the exploitation of our bodies
under the cover of love.
State control over our bodies
through men and fear.

They told us a story of self-sacrifice and exploitation,
but that story is over, and now I'm the one writing it.

In my story,
God dies
along with the husband
and the boss.

Red hearts, strong hearts.
That story is over, that order is over,
with our dead to the fight,
to the streets, and to disorder.

*Song from a video collage, rewriting of "Corazones Rojos"
by Los Prisioneros, May 2020, LASTESIS collective*

We have all felt the presence of patriarchal power and abuse in our bodies. Nevertheless, we work every day to eradicate the patriarchal effects of our behavior. The inherited, the learned, the internalized, those “lessons” that cost us because they kept us in our comfort zone. Unlearning what we have learned is an arduous task that translates into long hours of thinking through our emotions, which at times seems like unending work.

In this intense learning period of activism and uprisings, it is impossible not to notice our own growth in each one of us, influenced by all the artists and writers we have read, observed, and cited, and who have inspired our work. Their legacies allow us to connect, through memory, with the oppressions their bodies felt, oppressions not so different from those we feel in our own bodies today.

To understand our bodies as tools in the fight against neoliberal patriarchy is a way of resisting our classification as second-class citizens and the idea of private property. We must understand that some of our behavior comes from our patriarchal inheritances. For example: romantic love, idealized and possessive, where the ultimate fantasy is to establish a contract that benefits both parties; the concept of the nuclear family promoted by postwar advertising and film.

Each one of us has dealt with these retrogressive conceptions. All of us, in some way, have reproduced these patterns. Some feel fated to reproduce them forever, like a self-imposed sentence of unhappiness carried in the form of Christian moral guilt. Some have put an end to destructive relationships; others have not, resulting in pain, violence, and even death.

We have been married. Yes, legally married, and today happily divorced. We believed that marriage, that archaic institution, could be built and lived in a different way. We still believe it, perhaps. But our experience, unfortunately, only ended up reproducing typical sexist violence and oppression. A cheap cliché in which the husband tells us what’s right, what’s wrong, how to dress, and how to behave, opining on our body, on

what we want to do with our body, what we want to do with our life, our future projects, our dreams.

We have also been in relationships where we were physically, emotionally, and psychologically mistreated. We—who in theory are a bit more aware—lost ourselves under the cover of love. Today, we look back and don't recognize ourselves. Violence takes on so many different forms, and more times than we would like, it isn't so evident, doesn't come in the shape of a beating. It is often so subtle, disguised as the insecurity of a supposedly sensitive being, that we end up accepting the unacceptable. We end up replicating the circles of violence. We end up in the same place as friends whom we tell to get the fuck out.

Who hasn't been in a toxic romantic relationship? Because of our own wounded self-esteem or out of fear of being alone? Throughout our lives, we have been told that to be alone is pitiful and decadent, like the iconic image of the "crazy" cat lady, smoking, staring out into the distance. For us, that point on the horizon is brilliant. It is the internal peace of knowing you have chosen for yourself the life you wish to build, the life you dreamed of as a child, the life we all deserve to have.

It is to understand ourselves as women and dissidents, resistant and powerful bodies that carry the greatest burden of oppression—bodies that capitalism has sought to standardize into Eurocentric and North American stereotypes, as if that were the only form of beauty worthy of emulation. Where does that leave Black, mestizx, Brown, fat, disabled, scarred bodies? All that is dark, denied, hidden as if it were a disgrace to be carried?

Where does that leave bodies like ours, bodies that have decided to speak, denounce, note, reflect, divulge feminist content for different audiences without waiting for others to rise up in the face of oppression?

Where does that leave bodies like those of the *coyotes* who help families cross borders, accepting extralegal work to economically sustain their families? And those of the families who cross borders?

Where does that leave the bodies of Black, Latinx, Central American, Caribbean, and island migrants, who, on reaching their new territories, continue to do the work of modern servitude, where their university studies are not recognized and they are assigned tasks that no human should ever do?

Where does that leave the dissident bodies, those who experience their gender fluidly and must recognize themselves in a society that doesn't accept them, that tries to force them into a false binary?

Where does that leave a woman living in a Chilean tent city, who has never understood pleasure as her own, as something that should first be understood and owned by her before being shared with a sexual partner?

How many of us have felt complicated emotions about our bodies not living up to the hegemonic ideal dictated by the owners of mass media, fashion magazines, and ads? How can we deconstruct in ourselves the devaluation of everything "feminine"?

When you don't want to be subordinated to what patriarchal hierarchies impose; when you don't want to gestate, raise kids, breastfeed, teach, love, care for; when you're not looking for beauty, cleanliness, adornment, refinement, subtlety, whiteness, softness, intelligence; when your body doesn't meet the requirements—you are made invisible, even raped and punished.

Those who support these conservative and outdated ideas are those we should ban from our lives, because they do not contribute anything to the foundation of a just society.

Is it fair to abandon your children to fly to another country with your new family, with an empty reflection disguised as empathy: "With this family, I'll do it right"?

Is it fair to accept the abandonment of a man as less serious than that of a woman simply because it seems normal?

Is it fair to emotionally manipulate others for personal ends, such as economic stability, using your child as exchange currency?

Is the incentive for marriage fair because it is considered the only valid way of forging emotional ties? As if the family were the only source of emotional, physical, and economic stability in society.

If we had not sought out feminist texts on our own, and if this had not resulted in collaboration with others, we would still be accepting all these injustices. Art as a mode of expression opens up the door for freedom of thought. It allows us to recognize ourselves as individuals with unique, irreplaceable, and powerful qualities—and when these capabilities are put in the function of the collective, we can redirect the course of history. We become active protagonists in the social transformations for which we long.

We want these transformations to impact all of us equally. We cannot forget that, in a radically unequal country like Chile, precarity, poverty, hunger, and lack of stimulation abound. The quality of life does not support your basic needs, and if you don't have your basic needs met, you begin only to survive. Surviving means less time to live, less time to expand your worldview. That time for reflection after learning something new is a privilege given to those who do not carry the weight of survival.

How do we put forward ideas about bodies more precarious than ours?

How do we address issues as complex and specific as sexuality, dissident sexuality, female sexuality, or those who don't want to explore their sexualities at all?

As an example, in one of the workshops we held in Valparaíso, the five participants were all very different. One day we gave ourselves the freedom to talk openly about our desires and sexualities. It wasn't the main subject of the workshop, but we gave ourselves a day of testimony, the time and trust to share parts of our lives.

One participant began to recount the systematic violence she had experienced at the hands of her father, who beat and drugged her throughout her childhood. He was a cocaine paste dealer. Her mother accepted it. Her mother felt that he was the only source of income, the only guarantee that her children would eat. Then the tone of the conversation shifted and the woman confessed that, in her thirty-eight years, she had never had an orgasm, that her sexual partners would do their thing and she would just lie there, feeling no connection, to say nothing of sexual interaction and even less of pleasure. She said sex was a man's thing.

These situations occur daily in all sectors, territories, and social strata. If sexuality is ever addressed in the education system, it usually promotes abstinence and gender binarism. The starting point is never pleasure. To approach sexuality from the starting point of pleasure is seen as Biblical licentiousness, as Greco-Roman hedonism. This is how the church has become a main moral objector to our desires and pleasures.

Delinking pleasure from sexuality is violent, repressive; it crushes the freedom and originality with which we want to express our sexualities.

Forcing people to give birth and raise children as the world becomes increasingly hostile ignores the crudeness with which modern states operate by not providing social well-being for the people. To continue emphasizing

disease and pregnancy prevention, leaving aside the different ways we can express ourselves through experiences of pleasure, is to continue encouraging the sexual taboo established by so much abuse of power.

In order to feel connection with others, we must first feel connected to our own feelings, our own bodies, to touch ourselves and discover how we feel pleasure. Self-exploration is a path toward the freedom to express yourself with others in healthy ways.

Pleasure should be universal. And even though some of us possess an organ whose only function is pleasure—the clitoris—pleasure can be felt all over the body, including that place that unites us all: the anus.

The anus is pleasure. The clitoris is pleasure. But we rarely talk about them. We rarely speak of the democratizing potential of anal pleasure. It is truly inconceivable that so much is made of simply connecting with our own pleasure.

Sex education is practically nonexistent. When kids begin to use their imaginations, begin to understand sexual language, it should be explained in school. In these instances, it is necessary to promote respect for one's own body and the bodies of others, and to address the diversity of subjectivities, the multiplicities of gender expressions and ways of experimenting with sexuality, beyond just female-male and heteronormative sexuality.

The nonexistent access to comprehensive sexual education encourages many to internalize mass commercial pornography as the primary referent for what sexuality can be. But these productions are far from pedagogical, far from genuine representations of sexuality and its many variants.

The control over the bodies of women is historical. It is intrinsic to our social, cultural, political, and economic history. They have always wanted us silent, in the shadows of the home, in the service of domesticity and family—the traditional family, that is.

Good mother. Good daughter. Good girlfriend, good wife. Isolated, disconnected from our bodies and our history. Heterosexual and heteronormative. Incomplete. Alone. Depressed. Believer. Christian. Normal. Good humored. Ladylike. And sexual pleasure? Only in the service of another. It's a reminder that our bodies don't belong to us. It belongs to the family, to God, to school, to work, to your partner, to the state. In the

big and small aspects of our lives, our bodies aren't ours, because it's the property of something or someone else.

In this bleak landscape, pleasure appears as a form of resistance. Because taking responsibility for our own pleasure is to twist the arm of capitalism, patriarchy, and the status quo.

The healthiest way to talk about our enjoyment and sexual pleasure is to think of it as a form of health. A healthy sexuality, where the sexual protagonist is understood as a profoundly complex and unique body. This complexity fades away as we explore ourselves, touch ourselves, look at ourselves in the mirror, and begin to tear apart the culture of hating our diverse bodies. To desire ourselves before they desire us. To feel full freedom to express what we like and what we don't like, because communication in sex is healthier than we can even imagine.

Talking is key. The taboo of sex has caused us so much harm that it is time to break that pact of silence. No more sacrificing our pleasure. No more embarrassment about our feelings and desires. No more shutting up and repressing our impulses. From the time we are children, we should have the freedom to talk about sex, our own pleasure, and caring for ourselves, in safe spaces of trust. These are sociocultural shifts that are already developing, and we hope to soon break definitively with the external appropriation of our pleasure and sexuality.

Masturbation is an act of self-exploration, and if we don't explore ourselves habitually, we will be deprived of precious information about ourselves. Here is an example taken from the world of sewing: a tailor who doesn't know how to sew can't be in charge of relevant decisions about their work, nor can they outsource the sewing if they don't make some stitches first. The same happens with sex and, specifically, masturbation. How can we freely feel pleasure and satisfaction if we haven't even explored every nook of our bodies to know where and how we feel or don't feel pleasure? In this, we need to become experts.

Pleasure is an act of rebellion.

6 The Transformative Power of Performance

The patriarchy is a judge,
who judges us for being born,
and our punishment
is the violence you don't see.

The patriarchy is a judge,
who judges us for being born,
and our punishment
is the violence you already see.

It's femicide.
Impunity for my murderer.
It's the disappearances.
It's rape.

And it wasn't my fault,
not of where I was or how I was dressed.

And it wasn't my fault,
not of where I was or how I was dressed.

And it wasn't my fault,
not of where I was or how I was dressed.

And it wasn't my fault,
not of where I was or how I was dressed.

The rapist was you.

The rapist is you.

It's the cops.

The judges.

The state.

The president.

The oppressor state is a sexist rapist.

The oppressor state is a sexist rapist.

The rapist was you.

The rapist is you.

*Performance song “A Rapist in Your Path,” October 2019,
LASTESIS collective*

For us, there's a powerful and unbreakable bond between art and activism. Art is the language in which we have decided to work and express ourselves. What we do is not a hobby or entertainment, it's our work, our calling, to which we dedicate much of the time we don't spend working elsewhere in order to survive.

Nothing has been handed to us; no one finances us. People love to assume that if a group of women artists is of any importance, it must be because someone helped them. Some organization must be behind it all, because it's impossible that four women could have created something, anything, of importance without being part of a bigger, generally sinister, plan. Working out of conviction rather than for money is unintelligible to neoliberal and patriarchal logic.

Our art work is constant. We think about it much of the time, looking for sources of inspiration and provocation in our daily lives, seeking to expand our mental library of role models and references. Life without this search for the inspiring work of others is one of meager interiority, and we fight against mental and creative destitution. It's the least we can do to honor so much past and present courage.

We are writing this book today thanks to everyone who fought so that we could enter other spaces. To inhabit, even for a short period of time, historically masculinized spaces that are denied to other subjectivities. Spaces in which our voices, our demands, our complaints, our ideas can be heard. It is curious that, even today, so many people are horrified by the deployment of feminism in public spaces. But it's an ancient discussion. We could see it already when women began to wear pants in the nineteenth century and slowly and timidly entered certain masculinized spaces: the fear was widespread.

Even the street, that place that seems so obviously public, is limited. Take "A Rapist in Your Path," for example. A performance, a song, a choreography made for women and dissidents: Why does it cause such a

stir? Why do government representatives and the press need to weigh in on it, to say something, anything, about it? Why is it commented on, attacked but also shared on social media networks? This reaction affirms that we are battling for public space, even today. Battling to exist, to appear, to raise our voice.

To speak is an everyday act, one we do all the time with friends, family, acquaintances, strangers. But when we do it as a collective, in the streets, in public spaces, it carries a certain weight, a distinct potential. Women and dissidents in the streets fighting for and from their bodies, through performance, still disturbs people.

The feminist struggle runs through us, and it has run through us all our lives. Perhaps there were times when we didn't have the words for it, because we didn't know what feminism was, but we know and recognize it today. As artists, it was a natural trajectory to end up articulating feminist demands and ideas through art; as artists, our work revolves around politics. And the personal is the political.

With this idea in mind, at the beginning of 2018, we had the precious and rare opportunity to debut this collective project. We first thought about it from the framework of the performing arts, but in a matter of weeks, realized that we needed an interdisciplinary vision, one that could combine and integrate the performing arts with other artistic mediums in order to better spread our ideas.

Our objective was and is to disseminate feminist theory. This desire comes from our own lack of access to these ideas through formal education. We fervently believe that the translation of feminist ideas into other languages, approaching them not only theoretically and linguistically but also visually, audibly, and corporeally, contributes to their broader distribution.

We put ourselves to work and, in a few months, presented our first piece: an interdisciplinary, feminist performance collage. Demands and theories embodied by four different artists with an industrial and kitsch aesthetic. We used the structure of a collage because it organizes all the different elements in a nonhierarchical, nonlinear way. Collage combines elements and puts them in a similar plane of importance, and it is the task of the observer to decide what to look at and in what order, what to salvage and what to cast aside. For us, every part of the scene conveys information,

reiterates and builds on the main ideas, and even makes space for humor. We don't have to be serious just because we're feminists.

"Feminists are somber, killjoys, boring, misandrists, idiots, crazy; they have tattoos and short hair." We are tired of constantly hearing and reading about this stereotype of the feminist, the "feminazi," as if we wanted to commit genocide or exterminate men. That antisocial person that wants to destroy society, kill half the population, and seize power. It must be hard to see your enemy and not assume that she would do exactly what you would. Oppression, violence, and the fight for power are weapons of the patriarchy, and we're not interested. You can shove it and stop trying to fit us into your absurd paradigms, because, to quote a wise woman, we are not fodder for *hueones*, idiots.

Art is the battle trench from which we will wage our war of resistance, and we do not tire of saying it. We believe in the transformative power of art and performance. Art by bodies for bodies, collective art reclaimed through communal experiences. It was an idea that we had been thinking about and that finally materialized when we created "A Rapist in Your Path."

The massive adoption of our song-dance-performance, our intervention, is something that moves us enormously to this day. It was not something we went looking for or even imagined. It was a total and complete surprise that has been both very wonderful and very concerning. Wonderful because we are now part of an underground network of women and dissidents who don't adhere to national, cultural, or linguistic borders. The power is beautiful, a true gift. Nevertheless, it also shows us how the problem cuts across these lines, that sexual violence, like all types of patriarchal violence, is international.

It has been beautiful to see that in performance exists the beginning of an answer to the problem, at least in the raising of demands and denunciations. The performances reaffirm that putting our bodies on the line together legitimizes the historical demands of intersectional feminism. What comes next? We don't know yet. We have more questions than answers, more doubts than certainties.

The popular response to our performance probably has to do with the fact that we all share the personal experience of violence toward feminized bodies. Women and dissidents live this patriarchal violence, violence inscribed in our bodies. This is the root of the need to denounce structural

violence on every continent—in this case, through performance and performativity.

This violence is directly related to the creation of the modern state, the ideological foundation that institutionally reproduces systemic violence against bodies and territories. In that same vein, the right-wing denunciation of “A Rapist in Your Path” reflects ideas posited by Rita Segato (2003) and Virginie Despentes (2018), who provide a theoretical basis for what the patriarchy has called “whining.” Thanks to them and all the inspiring feminists who have deeply and beautifully influenced our work, thanks to the material legacy of the disruptors of the past, today we are fervently building a new common sense predicated on belonging and the desire for change.

Given the few opportunities we have had to read feminist theory, our relationship to academia is bittersweet. On the one hand, we all have backgrounds in higher education—an education not exempt from challenges, as we were creating and working to finance our studies—and today, some of us even work in universities. On the other hand, this showed us that there is a distinct lack of feminist theory in courses of formal study. The hegemony of white, male, cis-hetero, Western thought is generalized. Epistemological, methodological, historical, and theoretical violence is imposed under the guise of freedom of academic departments. Rotten accounts are reiterated, and narratives that do not represent us are shored up.

How do we combat this? With action, not just critique. That is what we try to do. To fill those gaps and hopefully reach more people with these ideas, outside the hegemony of the text, of the word. This process also constitutes study, but it doesn’t adhere to the regulatory and rigid standards of an “academic” investigation. We aren’t trying, nor are we looking, for academic approval. Academia, fundamentally patriarchal, also requires a profound reconfiguration from the roots, as all historical institutions do.

The egos of academics are so big that they truly believe they know much more than others do, when actually they’re the ones who lack a solid foundation. There are many different ways of knowing. What is it with throwing the names of authors and publications in people’s faces to validate your superiority? As if citations were representative of the highest wisdom on the planet, when, in reality, no one will ever be able to absorb all the information in the world before they die. What we need is to do something

with the information available to us now, to stimulate other minds and unleash an unstoppable domino effect.

Academic feminism taken to the streets has had its effects on demands for justice in legal cases concerning abuse and rape, which are generally stacked against women and survivors. More than once, pressure from feminists has been essential in winning some kind of resolution. Nevertheless, revictimization is constant: in hearings, in the media, and even in our own families. Incessant questioning of the abused is the first response after a complaint is filed—a reason many of us avoid channels of legal justice and appeal instead to social justice. Protest—criticized and devalued—is one of the only mechanisms we have left to protect ourselves as a community from potential future abuses and abusers.

We keep us safe—from abuse, yes, but also from guilt. It wasn't our fault. It wasn't my fault or your fault. Those responsible are the abusers, the accomplices, the silence. We have to protect ourselves from stereotypes that determine whether we are good or bad victims. Because even after we die, they sort us into good and bad.

A raped and/or murdered woman appears in the press if she is the daughter of a “good” family and behaves well in the eyes of society. But what happens when the victim is queer, trans, poor, an addict, or simply not so “well-behaved”? She practically doesn't exist according to the media, and if she does, it's only to use her as an example of what you get when you ask for it, when you deserve what happens to you. In this sense, conservative and Christian morality continues to be very powerful, and feminists are its staunch enemies.

Those who feel that their power or privileges have been deeply questioned are the ones most fearful of feminism. And in their privilege, they choose to ignore the oppressions that don't affect them, even if they wield them against others. But they also attack to preserve their privileges.

“I hope they get killed,” “I hope they get raped,” “They want to divide the movement,” “This is an attack on the class struggle”: these are some of the things we often hear, plus many other jabs at our ideas, our intellects, our bodies, our sexualities. In general, it has become “common” to be attacked for what we do and what we don't do. Having reached a high level of media exposure, we are expected to have something to say in response to any situation.

To defy normativity and question the privileges of some will always put us in an uncomfortable position, at the center of all kinds of attacks, for trying to break out of our position of subordination. The response will be to attack, ridicule, minimize, and infantilize us; treat us as ignorant; criticize our physical appearance; or whatever else they can use against us. We all have a long list of examples.

The traditional family table is a special gathering site for sexism, gender roles, stereotypes, and of course, great secrets of sexual violence. To try to get others to see some of this, at the very least, earns us the label of drama queen.

Feminism is a long journey that can be traveled in different ways, depending on personal history. The path of some is steep and cobblestoned—in no way easy to walk. That of others is paved and smooth. Others encounter forks in the road over the years. Most likely, violence is the starting point for us all. Most likely, a friend invited us along the way, pointing to and nudging us down the road. At first they'll say we're too much, that we're seeing problems where there aren't any. That we're trying to distract people from the real issues with our second-class complaints.

If we report sexual, physical, or psychological violence, the response will almost always be more violence. They'll probably treat us like we're crazy or attention seeking, or accuse us of wanting to screw up someone else's life, of being jealous of another woman. They'll blame us for all the world's ills, as they have done throughout history.

They will rub our faces in our economic dependence on our fathers or husbands, even if it's not true and we support ourselves. And they will never grant us the privilege of being a thoughtful, creative, and independent being. They will wish us raped, locked in the kitchen, static, silent, and hopefully personable and diligent. They will wish us exploited for life. They will wish us dead.

They have wished us dead. They have wished us dead for creating and carrying out a performance. For singing and dancing with our friends to denounce historical violence. But there were others who thanked us, who saw themselves in the performance, made it their own and raised their own demands.

Strangely, many have used the word *success* to allude to our work. We hate it, because this supposed success came from a process that had no pretensions or intentions of being "successful." Instead of *success*, we think

it has had a *social effect* that allows us to have a space to speak, to act. A space that carries responsibility and requires arduous work. In it, we have tried and will try to keep putting forward feminist demands, translating feminist theory, presenting our methodology. For now, this is how we think we can best contribute to art and activism.

When they ask us “What comes next?” we always have the same answer: We plan to keep doing our art-activist work. To keep thinking about how to give shape to ideas, how to give artistic form to feminism’s questioning of that which is assumed to be normal. To keep creating out of our diverse languages and bodies, to keep circulating feminist theory and our demands, our indictments. If we serve as a platform for all these voices, we will use it to the fullest. If you think we’re ignorant, we don’t care. We don’t mind repeating the same things over and over again, because there are still those who don’t understand, whether they can’t or don’t want to. The struggle is long and we are ready to keep going. We only hope that this feminist network, this transcontinental behemoth out of our control, grows immense and impossible not to see; that it becomes impossible for anyone to avert their eyes or plug their ears, because our shouts will be so loud that they will echo around world.

7 The Oppressor State (1312)

ACAB.

All cops are bastards.
But on our continent of bastard children, of
orphans—being
bastards ourselves—sometimes we want to find other
adjectives.
All cops are inhumane.
All cops are rapists.
All cops are murderers.

We speak from the long, thin strip of land
of this continent.
The territory that brings together all climates,
all landscapes,
absolutely all inequalities.

219 days ago, the uprisings began,
breaking silences, fears;
a burst of rage organized to
demand dignity. Because Chile is a country
that humiliates those who inhabit it; patriarchy,
police, hardened state policies
to silence injustice.
A little over two months ago, the global pandemic
arrived at our doors.

Today,
who are we?
We are the implacable and powerful enemy
of the president.
Who are we?
The neighbors who
risk everything to make
food for those in need.
Who are we?
The workers who, armed
with fire and pots and pans, take to the streets when

“we shouldn’t,” to cry in hunger.
Who are we?
Victims of domestic violence and
sexual violence, whose only supposed way out is to call
the rapist, murderous police.
Who are we?
The sick and disabled and all the healthcare
workers deprived of resources.
This is in large part the confinement of this
territory; like the one in which you live, we share
the same rage.
And the cops follow us, block the
exits of our homes, provoke us,
infiltrate protests, and begin to
burn everything. They parade armed down our
streets, fly over our heads, throw
gas, beat, torture, rape, destroy,
blind us. They enjoy this invented
war, the wave of cocaine, like
puppets of a government that discards
its people, in which tanks, *guanacos* (water cannons),
zorrillos (gas trucks), and bullets in the eye
are forms of controlling and disappearing
people with political consciousness.
Meanwhile, those neighbors
die not just from the health crisis,
but also from unfettered capitalism, patriarchy, and
denial.

They will not silence us; the system is destroying
itself and its deterioration is evident.
Today, more than ever,
we can push forward our counterattack.
The anti-protest law went to hell.
COVID shattered time.
The collective shouts “unification!”
to destroy the institution of the police.
The people shout “enough!”
The obscuring of people’s real problems
is devastating and humiliating.
Your inhumanity no longer has a place.
There is no respite packaged in a box of merchandise
that will hold.

We have spent over seven months in the struggle
in our country.
The government won’t listen

and upgrades the police's weapons.
This still hasn't ended.

The police don't keep me safe; my friends keep me safe.

*Text from the video performance "Manifesto against
Police Violence," May 2020, LASTESIS collective*

When we speak of violence, we are always thinking of it as systemic and encompassing multiple spheres: sexual, symbolic, physical, psychological, institutional, statal, patriarchal. Violence is intersectional and is often disguised as moralism, conservatism, and even legality.

Without a doubt, the Chilean police's intention to censor, intimidate, and persecute will never fail to shock us.

On May 29, 2020, we posted a video to our social media. The video was of a performance denouncing police brutality in Chile and all of Latin America. In it, we are wearing red overalls in front of the precincts in Valparaíso, and you can hear our voices, reciting something we wrote on the subject.

In one moment, we recount: "They [the cops] follow us, block the exits of our homes, provoke us, infiltrate protests, and begin to burn everything. They parade armed down our streets, fly over our heads, throw gas, beat, torture, rape, destroy, blind us ... The government won't listen and upgrades the police's weapons."

The police reacted indignantly and filed two complaints against us for "contempt of authority" and "inciting violence." Two complaints accompanied by a ridiculous report that included photographs of the video performance, testimonies, and our full names.

It was a big deal to us that the cops filed a report. First, because we found out through the media, which was willing to promote the attack. Second, because they are agents of the state, agents who are supposed to protect their citizenry. We say "citizenry" and not "the people" because we know they don't recognize the people, the people of which we, too, are part.

Faced with a direct attack such as this—and we do see it as a direct attack—we're erased, left wondering if what we were denouncing in our protest and performance against police violence warranted "all that."

We started thinking that life is absurd; that those who abuse power won't ever understand the metaphor; that just as education is a problem in

our country, so is the violent institution of the police. Let us take this brief anecdote and pause to see what is happening here.

In this context, in which we as an entire society are under attack not only from a pandemic but also from inequality, the institution with a monopoly on violence—which remains unaccountable for violating human rights—takes the time to persecute, intimidate, censor, and harass a feminist art collective.

They want to see us in the home, confined to domestic tedium, the private sphere, silenced, rendered invisible; they want to send us back to that place of subordination to which we have historically been relegated; they want to censor our work; they want to deny us the right to express ourselves through art; they want to deny us the right to protest, distorting our work and charging us on ridiculous terms.

The police's behavior toward us only shows their systemic abuse of power, equating poetry with the real violence for which they are responsible, denying room for metaphor, art, activism, and the legitimate indictment made by the people in all spheres of society since October 2019.

Now, let us think for a moment about the police's performance in all of this, in the explicit and coercive act of censorship. Let's close our eyes for an instant, sort through the facts, think out loud, see where we end up. The (unpunished) institution of the Chilean police—along with the Chilean government and (unpunished) president (now, former president)—is redefining the limits of art, accusing performances of being attacks on authority, handcuffing lyricists, mutilating metaphors, gassing subjectivities, imprisoning words, and raiding every one of our works.

All of this is happening at the same time that the independent media is being restricted, that projections of words in public spaces by the art collective Delight Lab are being censored. Yes, words that those of us with less privilege have not been able to stop thinking about lately: *hunger*, *dignity*, and, once again, *censorship*.

We think it is important to understand these occurrences as a totality, not isolated incidents. The repression wasn't luck, not even bad luck.

Up to now, they have not heard the demands of the people and they have not taken responsibility for any of their faults. We won't give them the right to tell us how to create and work. The violence of the attack was not only directed toward us, but also toward all women, dissidents, artists, and

those in the struggle against patriarchy and its nefarious institutions. The oppressor state in its maximum splendor.

But on the heels of the attack also came the defense, which equally surprised us. The quickly mobilized support for our collective and our work, from local, national, and even international organizations, was and is massive. The underground network we mentioned earlier made itself known, standing firm. Support came from art collectives, networks of artists, human rights defenders, university professors and departments, Latin American immigrant communities abroad, and even the actresses in those gringo movies we watched as kids.

We were not alone. We are not alone.

The state, through the police and Ministry of the Interior, has publicly supported the case against us and expressed their clear intention to intimidate artistic expression and collectives that threaten the very respect they have made sure to erode over the years.

We believe that today, society is much more critical and observant of governments, violence, and received information. Making an example of us made “sense” to the state, just as it did with other groups of women and dissidents who have protested since October 2019 and long before.

If it is easier to censor four creative women than it is to censor the inept troops threatening people in the streets, the administrators of the state have a crisis of priorities on their hands. It seems that their priority is to normalize the militarization of our streets with unaccountable military personnel and police stationed in our daily lives, armed from head to toe in a war against a powerful, implacable, but imaginary, enemy.

The weight of the constant gaze of institutions and people that declare us enemies is violently exhausting. They always have an opinion, something to say, something to criticize, something to invent. It doesn't matter what we do or don't do—they'll make shit up regardless, because everything is always fodder for the most cowardly of attacks. Their surveillance is relentless, always directed at both our work as a collective and us as individuals.

To think that our daughters, mothers, sisters, or grandmothers could witness or experience this violence is probably what is hardest for us, what pains us most. But the struggle is worth it, and we never forget where the attacks come from: misogyny, fascism, ignorance.

One story helps illustrate this. After our debut of “A Rapist in Your Path” in Valparaíso, in which we quoted a verse of the police’s own anthem, cops came out to repress protestors with a loudspeaker playing the original song. It was a symbolic reclamation of the anthem that had been tainted by us perverse feminists, but it was actually illegal, because the police are only allowed to play it during official events.

Of course, we laughed at them.

How could we not laugh at their ridiculous act, when, in the face of their bullets, the only things we have are our bodies, our diverse counterhegemonic subjectivities, and a whole lot of rage? When every day we fight the terror of their politics and weapons?

The fear of being repressed, raped, mutilated, murdered, disappeared. This has been common in Latin America. Today, perhaps it’s more hidden, but it’s still there, in all forms, all the time. Even now. As we write this and as you read this, wherever you may be, it’s happening. “Democracies” endure a lot and know how to hide it very well, but we are looking straight at them.

We watch them from the underground network of women and dissidents. From the edges where we weave together multiple threads to make a new fabric. Multicolored and multisensory textures, across borders, across cultures. A nonlinear, nonhomogeneous fabric, as incendiary as it is oceanic. As solid as it is liquid, with the potential to be indestructible at the same time as it vanishes into air, into water, to adapt according to the paths we find. To reinvent ourselves along with our multiple strategies of and for struggle.

Our battlegrounds are so numerous that we may never be able to fully fight on all fronts. But their bombs will never be enough, because together we have already embarked on this path against the patriarchy, against all forms of oppression. And there is no turning back.

Together

Together we set fire to the criminal alliance of patriarchy and capitalism.

Together we set fire to labor, sexual, and reproductive exploitation.

Together we set fire to patriarchal institutions and structures.

Together we set fire to impunity.

Together we set fire to sexism, machismo, and misogyny.

Together we set fire to heteronormativity.

Together we set fire to forced motherhood.

Together we set fire to the guilt.

Together we set fire to symbolic, domestic, and sexual violence.

Together we set fire to the violence inscribed in our bodies.

Together we set fire to the pact of silence in the face of so much abuse and oppression.

Together we set fire to the fear.